ARTICLE CARRIER HAVING SINGLE SIDED RELEASABLE CROSS BAR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to vehicle article carriers, and more particularly to a vehicle article carrier incorporating a locking mechanism which allows a user to simultaneously place both bracket members of the article carrier in locked and unlocked positions by manually engaging a single actuating member at one side of the vehicle article carrier, and without interfering with the roof of the vehicle during manipulation of the actuating member.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Vehicle article carriers are used in a wide variety of applications to transport a variety of articles above an outer body surface of the vehicle. Such vehicle article carriers typically include a pair of slats or elevated siderails which are fixedly mounted to the outer body surface of the vehicle, a pair of bracket members slidably disposed at ends of the slats or siderails, and a cross bar disposed between the bracket members so as to be supported above the outer body surface by the bracket members. In some applications two cross bars are employed, with the second cross bar being secured either fixedly to the slats or siderails, or being adjustably secured via its own pair of bracket members disposed slidably upon the slats or siderails.

[0003] Each bracket member used in most vehicle article carrier systems typically includes some form of locking mechanism with an actuating member for placing the locking mechanism in a locked or unlocked position. When the locking mechanism of each bracket member is in its unlocked position, both bracket members may be moved slidably along the slats or siderails to allow the cross bar therebetween to be repositioned as desired along the slats. The obvious drawback to this arrangement is that when the user desires to reposition the cross bar, first one of the bracket members must be unlocked and then the user must walk around to the opposite side of the vehicle to unlock the other bracket member. Once the cross bar has been moved to its desired position by the user, the user must manually place both of the bracket members in their locked positions. Thus, the user is presented with the inconvenience of separately locking and unlocking two bracket members whenever the cross bar is to be repositioned.

[0004] Some manufacturers of vehicle article carriers have attempted to address this problem by providing means for simultaneously locking and unlocking each bracket member via a single actuating mechanism. One such article carrier is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,190,198 to Cucheran, assigned to the assignee of the present application. Other forms of single-side releasable mechanisms are disclosed in U.S. 6,112,964 to Cucheran et al. The disclosures of each of these patents are hereby incorporated by reference into the present application.

[0005] While the single-side releasable crossbars disclosed in the above-referenced patents have proven to be successful and satisfactory for their intended uses, in some applications where a siderail is employed, there is very little clearance between the underside of the bracket mechanism at each end of the cross bar and the outer body surface of the vehicle. This necessitates a form of actuating member which can be opened and closed without interference with the outer body surface of the vehicle roof.

[0006] Accordingly, it would be highly desirable to provide a vehicle article carrier which incorporates a means for simultaneously locking and unlocking both bracket members from their respective slats, as well as a means for holding both bracket members in their unlocked positions once the bracket members are urged into an unlocked orientation. It would be further be highly desirable to provide such a bracket member which includes an actuating member which can be moved pivotably between locked and unlocked positions by a user without interfering with the outer body surface of the vehicle.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] The above and other objects are provided by a vehicle article carrier apparatus having a single-sided release mechanism in accordance with preferred embodiments of the present invention. The apparatus generally includes a pair of siderails which are adapted to be fixedly secured to an outer body surface of a vehicle. The siderails are secured in a spaced apart, generally parallel configuration on the outer body surface of the vehicle. At least one cross